



Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics

2023 Legislative Agenda

2023 Legislative Priorities

We advocate for:

- *Increased vaccination rates among Alabama youth:* In light of recent declines in routine vaccinations Alabama and across the nation, it is imperative that we sustain Alabama's historically strong immunization system to prevent childhood diseases. The Chapter opposes any legislation that would create additional barriers for children to receive recommended childhood immunizations or restrict their availability.

- *Improving child health through adequate Medicaid and CHIP funding and Medicaid expansion:* Sustainable and permanent revenue solutions to adequately fund Medicaid and CHIP for children is a permanent priority of the Alabama Chapter-AAP. In addition, the Chapter strongly supports expanded coverage for low-income adults who don't currently qualify for Medicaid. Children whose parents have coverage have better health outcomes, and infant mortality rates have shown decline in expansion states compared to non-expansion states. For these same reasons the Chapter continues to advocate for expanding Medicaid coverage for new mothers from 60 days to 12 months postpartum.

- *Protection of the Medical Home and the practice of medicine:* With the pediatric medical home established as the best place for care of children of all ages, the Chapter opposes any legislative efforts that threaten the medical home and supports those that protect it. The Chapter also opposes any attempts to control the practice of medicine, interfere with the doctor-patient relationship, or dictate requirements that violate current AAP guidelines and recommendations for the care of children.

- *Amending Alabama's Chemical Endangerment Law:* The Chapter supports new recommendations to amend Alabama's Chemical Endangerment Law to reduce negative outcomes on families, further the law's original intent of protecting children from harm, and promote wellness in the community.

- *Adequate funding for birth to 5 services:* To support the needs of infants and young children, the Chapter advocates for: 1) additional funding for voluntary, high-quality, pre-k programs; 2) adequate funding for Alabama's Early Intervention Services; 3) continued funding for Maternal and Infant Mortality Review in the General Fund; and 4) increased funding for treatment beds for pregnant women with substance use disorder and their children.

2023 Educational Priorities

- *Strengthening Alabama's Child Passenger Safety Law:* The Chapter strongly encourages consideration of amendments to the state's child passenger safety seat law to reflect the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which could help decrease the risk of serious injury to children involved in motor vehicle accidents by as much as 90 percent and fatalities by as much as 67 percent.

- *Support for children and families affected by mental health issues:* A rising number of Alabama children are faced with trauma and adverse childhood experiences. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other national and state organizations have declared a national children's mental health emergency, citing the serious toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chapter is partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health to mitigate these effects and looks to policymakers for their continued support.

- *Prevention of firearm-related injuries in children:* Firearm-related injuries are the number one leading cause of death among U.S. children and youth ages one to 24 years. Alabama is in the top five states in firearm-related death rates. The Chapter urges consideration of policy changes that would impact these statistics, such as safe storage, improving background checks, instituting red flag laws, and conforming the age to purchase assault rifles to that of handguns.